



Washington State Transportation Commission

Oak Harbor Meeting Summary
November 14, 2018

Chairman Jerry Litt opened the meeting at 9:00 am.

Commission Business

Chairman Jerry Litt introduced the Commissioners and staff.

Commissioner Jennings moved and Commissioner Tortorelli seconded the motion approving the October 16 & 17, meeting summary. The motion was approved unanimously.

Transportation 101

Paul Parker, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission, presented an overview of transportation planning and finance.

[Transportation 101](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Regional Transportation: The Big Picture

The Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO) consists of Whidbey and Camano Islands. Both have bridges to the mainland, and two ferry routes serving Whidbey. With no bridge or ferry connecting the two islands, travel between them requires a 90-minute drive through two other counties.

Brian Wood, Transportation Planner, Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization, reported that Island County has the second highest population density among Washington counties. There is a strong military presence on Whidbey Island. Camano Island is a bedroom community and distant from the county seat. Both islands draw many tourists. The Deception Pass Bridge connecting Whidbey Island to the mainland is a tourist attraction itself.

More than half the region's population is over 60 years old. Commuting is common: 19,000 leave the region each day for work. If you work here, you probably live here, but if you live here, you probably don't work here. There also is a lot of pass-through traffic, including traffic to and from the Olympic Peninsula. There is interest in exploring the possibility of passenger-only ferries to connect the two islands and directly connect Whidbey to Everett.

Big challenges for Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization:

- Accommodating growth while maintaining a rural character
- Addressing transportation needs of an aging population
- Managing seepage
- Navigating wetland and slope stability issues
- Securing permits for culverts and tide gates
- Mitigating impacts of a stormy marine environment

Island Region Transportation

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

City Transportation Issues, Challenges and Successes

The City of Oak Harbor is the center of commerce and employment on Whidbey Island. It is home and support to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island.

Key transportation projects for Oak Harbor include:

- NE 7th Avenue
- Bayshore Drive, City Beach Street, Pioneer Way
- Roundabouts on SR 20 from SW Swantown Avenue to SE Cabot Drive
- Explore public options for airport operations

The Town of Coupeville hosts the county seat and hospital. Its population more than doubles during the week creating traffic and service needs. The town is completely within Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve, with the state's largest concentration of historic buildings.

The city's small staff makes it challenging to find and manage grant opportunities. Other challenges facing Coupeville:

- ADA compliance is expensive and requirements frequently change
- The City wants to offer an Electric Vehicle charging station; they are expensive
- Commercial traffic to SR 20 from the Coupeville ferry dock goes right through the K-12 school zone
- Unstable bluffs will effect streets and trails in downtown Coupeville

Successes:

- Coupeville has installed gravel pathways in place of traditional cement sidewalks. They are less expensive
- The town's biggest transportation problem is deer

Langley is a city of 1170 people in one square mile. It is the regional retail, dining, and entertainment center for South Whidbey. Its 40,000 annual visitors arrive by auto, bus, bicycle, motorcycle, boat, airplane, seaplane, kayak, and tour boat.

Successes in Langley include:

- Paving for primary system - funded or completed

- Sidewalk improvements - funded or completed
- 2nd Street storm management and multimodal improvements – funded through Complete Streets and Transportation Improvement Board grants. It is working well and promoting economic vitality
- Complete street for downtown 1st Street is partially funded

Challenges include the need for better multimodal connections into the town center, parking limitations, a funding mechanism for Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure, pedestrian improvements, and improved ferry connectivity – auto, freight, foot.

[City of Oak Harbor](#)

[Town of Coupeville](#)

[City of Langley](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

County Transportation Issues, Challenges and Successes

Bill Oakes, Public Works Director, Island County, talked about the importance of ferries, bridges, and SR 20 to Island County mobility. Multi-modal connections are essential to ferries' mobility, including transit interface, non-motorized access, multi-modal mainland connections and park & ride access.

Mr. Oakes emphasized that the Deception Pass Bridge is the only way for large loads and fuel to get to Whidbey Island. The pass has challenges, notably congestion, traffic, parking, and people.

Other important challenges include:

- Access to NAS Whidbey. Base access is reached via four gates: one to the North and three on the South: main-gate, Langley, and Hospital
- Electric Vehicle Planning, including power demands and power sources, and who should provide and operate
- Data connections to reduce trips

[Island County Focus](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Public Transportation Issues, Challenges and Successes

Shawn Harris, Operations Manager, Island Transit, reported that Island Transit serves Whidbey Island with 10 routes and Camano Island with 5 routes. Its fleet includes 15 heavy-duty buses and 30 cutaway buses for fixed route operations and 18 light duty buses for paratransit operations. The fixed route service provided 569,199 trips in 2017. The Inter-County Connector Service provided 50,000 trips in 2017.

Future needs and challenges include:

- Funding for the acquisition of property and construction of the Bayview Transit Center
- Fleet expansion
- Hybrid/Electric buses
- New bus wash facility
- Bus pull-outs along Hwy 20
- Secure funding for the Inter-County Connectors
- Integrating Washington State Ferries (WSF) schedule into Island Transit's schedule for consistency
- Connectivity throughout Island County (SR 20 Corridor/Scenic Isle Way)
- Clinton park & ride expansion
- Swantown & SR 20 is a choke point causing traffic delays throughout the corridor
- Deception Pass Bridge is a choke point for vehicles traveling on and off the Island
- SR 532 on Camano Island is a choke point to I-5

Karla Jacks, Executive Director, Camano Center, briefed the Commission on transportation challenges faced by youth, seniors, the disabled, homeless, and veterans. Transportation needs and gaps include:

- Areas outside Transit Service Area
 - Paratransit only going $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from service route
 - Seniors and people with disabilities
- Evening Service and Sunday Service
 - Entry level jobs and youth
 - Church, social connections, jobs, seniors, people with disabilities
- Coordinating with other Service Providers
 - Community Transit, Ferries, SKAT, etc...
- Too many transfer points
- Camano Islanders, who depend on the bus, cannot arrive on time for jury duty on Whidbey Island

Camano Island lacks access to medical services, veteran's services, government services, community services, education, and social activities. Solutions for these challenges begin with partnerships. The North Snohomish County Transportation Coalition is collecting data on gaps and maximizing resources (Camano Island, Stanwood, Smokey Point, Arlington, and Everett).

Camano Center offers free travel options:

- Monthly essential shopping trip with lunch (Burlington/Costco)
- Bi-monthly local shopping trip
- Volunteer medical driver program (504 last year on Camano Island)
- Camano Connections Delivery

[Island Transit Improving Mobility 2018](#)
[Public Transportation Camano Center](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Washington State Ferries Long-Range Plan

Amy Scarton, Assistant Secretary, Washington State Ferries, Washington State Department of Transportation, reported on the public outreach on the Draft Long-Range Plan and revisions under consideration. Over 3,600 people participated and 390 specific comments were submitted.

Comments emphasized:

- Prioritize reliable service through building new vessels
- Use technology to improve operational efficiencies and accessibility
- Encourage multimodal transportation through transit connections and improved amenities
- Provide system capacity enhancements to meet growing ridership demands
- Define new metrics and implement strategies to manage growth
- Design resilient and environmentally friendly vessels and terminal areas

The Plan prioritizes needs:

- Near term (0-2 years)—stabilizing the system
- Medium term (3-7 years)—building the infrastructure
- Long term (8-20 years)—responding to growth

Potential modifications to the Draft Long-Range Plan:

- Add strategies based on feedback from advisory groups and organizations:
 - Revise performance metrics
 - Pursue partnerships with mobility on-demand services
 - Re-examine scheduling as a tool for enhancing on-time performance
 - Re-examine opportunities to enhance shipyard availability to support rapid building of vessels
- Add focus areas based on public input and community engagement:
 - Explore parking opportunities at and near terminals
 - Coordination with transit agencies that provide passenger-only service
 - Additional considerations beyond the constraints of this plan
 - Consider the impact to service in the absence of long-range investment
- Clarify information presented in the Draft Plan:
 - Better illustrate the fleet composition and new vessels called for during the planning horizon
 - Strengthen the discussion of accessibility, particularly with respect to multimodal connections and ADA needs
 - Expand on strategies to manage growth, including service hour adjustments, freight traffic needs, parking, mode shift, and two-season schedule
 - Expand on electrification and emergency response planning
 - Identify and prioritize future studies and specify key decision milestones

[WSF 2040 Long Range Plan](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Projects and Perspectives

Jay Drye, Assistant Regional Administrator, Mt. Baker Region, Washington State Department of Transportation, reported that in 2017 WSDOT repaved 27 miles of SR 20 at a cost of \$13,400,000. Painting and structural repairs of the SR 20 Deception Pass & Canoe Pass Bridges will begin next year at a cost of \$20 million.

The Sharpe's Corner roundabout was originally conceived as a partial overpass. At a cost of \$13.4 million, it is a practical solution within fiscal constraints. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) also will construct a series of roundabouts and improvements in the SR 20 Swantown Road to Barrington Corridor as a part of Connecting Washington. The \$30 million project is not scheduled until 2030.

NW Region Transportation

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Transportation Needs of The Us Navy

Brian Tyhuis, Community Planner and Base Liaison Officer, Naval Air Station Whidbey (NAS Whidbey), reported that there are 40,000 people connected with the Navy in the Puget Sound region. The economic impact of NAS Whidbey alone is \$1 billion. Because of consolidated administrative offices, it is more important than ever to maintain the transportation networks. Most travel from Whidbey NAS is to Naval Base Kitsap.

US Navy Transportation Needs

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Economic Development and Transportation

Sharon Sappington, Executive Director, Economic Development Council, Island County, explained that transportation is one of the components of infrastructure that impacts:

- Creation and preservation of jobs
- Improvement of Island County's economic competitiveness
- Increasing tax base
- Promotion of partnerships with the private sector
- Enhancement of safety and mobility

The economic development activity categories in Island County most impacted by transportation include business recruitment, business retention and expansion, and startup. Some of the ways that transportation impacts economic development in Island County are:

Job and labor market accessibility

- Size of employee pool available to employers from inside and outside the county
- County resident's direct access to more job options

New markets for businesses

- Improved transportation options do more than decrease travel time or distance for workers. Transportation can be a factor in shifting the business sectors that are attracted to Island County
- Improved transportation can attract new development within Island County, both residential and commercial, providing businesses and people with more options to earn and spend their money

Productivity increases when:

- People have increased accessibility to reach jobs
- Businesses have increased accessibility to reach services and goods
 - Reduced travel time means improved worker productivity
 - Improved freight delivery times results in truck drivers being more efficient and can make more runs in their daily shift. Increased worker and business productivity increases the productivity of Island County as a whole

Supply chain efficiency

- Improved transportation can increase economic productivity and development by:
 - Improving access to markets, goods and services
 - Reducing the cost of moving people and goods

Current airports and ports aren't generally serving the distribution of goods. The Port of Coupeville operates the Coupeville Wharf. The Port Of South Whidbey operates boating facilities at South Whidbey Harbor at Langley, Clinton Beach Park, Pier and Dock, Bush Point Boat Ramp, and Possession Beach Waterfront Park.

The Port of South Whidbey also operates the Humphrey Road ferry parking lot (daily and permit parking for Clinton-Mukilteo ferry). Ferry parking is a major challenge in Mukilteo, where there is no public parking space in the Mukilteo waterfront where you can legally park for more than 4 hours. Current demand for parking at peak times in the Mukilteo waterfront area is 1,320 parking stalls; there is a shortage of 518 stalls. Available parking in Mukilteo has diminished since 2005. In 2005, there were 970 parking stalls. In 2018, there are 802 parking stalls a 17% reduction.

The Port of South Whidbey and the Tulalip Tribes are collaborating to create a parking lot in the City of Mukilteo downtown waterfront area. The project will result in 254 parking stalls adjacent to the new multimodal facility in Mukilteo. The intent is to provide additional parking to support the new multimodal facility being constructed in Mukilteo; with a portion of the parking stalls dedicated to overnight parking for walk-on ferry passenger who visitor Whidbey Island.

[Economic Development Council Island County](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Tourism, Recreation and Transportation

Sherrye Wyatt, Public Relations, Marketing Manager and Film Liaison, Island County Tourism, briefed the Commission on tourism and transportation in Island County. Tourism helps a community preserve who you are. The slogan is “The Shortest Distance to Far Away.” Tourism is growing: the shoulder season is getting shorter and the peak season is getting longer.

Whidbey Island lands 20% of the total Washington State Ferry ridership. It is a great partnership. Other travel options include Island Transit, tour buses, charters, and the Whidbey-Sea-Tac Shuttle. Paine Field flights will be an asset for tourism. There are safety improvements to make on SR 20 and SR 525. There have been 31 accidents in Coupeville at Broadway and SR 20 over five years.

[Whidbey Camano Islands](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Healthy Communities and Transportation

Laura Luginbill, Assessment & Healthy Communities Director, Island County Public Health, talked about Island County’s Community Health Improvement Plan. In developing it, they examined 140 indicators and identified four priorities to pursue:

- Access to care
- Interpersonal abuse
- Housing
- Depression and suicide

Transportation is a barrier or part of a solution for each of these four areas. She recommended that Human Services Transportation Plans are a powerful tool and should be aligned with the Community Health Improvement Plan.

[Island County Public Health](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Regional Connections Beyond Island County: The North Sound Transportation Alliance

Melissa Fanucci, Principal Planner, Whatcom Council of Governments, talked about her role as staff to the North Sound Transportation Alliance (NSTA). The Alliance, which is focused on transportation without a personal vehicle, is comprised of Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties.

NSTA has four goals:

1. Collect travel and system data to identify needs
2. Improve regional connections and sustain and expand services
3. Enhance mobility through sustainable, equitable, and innovative transportation solutions

4. Inform the public about transportation services to enhance awareness of the regional transportation network

NSTA has worked on areas of common interest: Health and Transportation, Transit, and Ferries.

Health & Transportation:

- Expand the 2-1-1 system to include direct phone transfers to transit agencies and other volunteer service providers
- Extend universal broadband for the entire five county region for improved telemedicine and communication with transportation providers
- Study the feasibility of on-demand transit in all five counties
- Study the feasibility of I-5 Flyer Stops, including transit stops and park & rides
- Expand and implement mobile medical clinics to bring medical resources to rural communities

Transit. Identify the ideal county connector system:

- Single fare
- Borderless, easy to understand
- Sustainably funded
- High frequency
- Safe, speedy, comfortable
- Inclusive, equitable, accessible
- Good on-time performance

Ferries. Three questions:

- How do we make “door to door, not shore to shore” happen
- How do we accommodate and plan for future ridership growth
- How do we address ferry service sustainability as a community

NSTA has common ideas to present to legislators at its next meeting:

1. Flyer stops on I-5 feasibility study
2. On-demand transit feasibility study
3. Transit meeting ferries on ferry schedule
4. Consider non-traditional options (TNCs) for connecting services

Brian Wood, Island RTPO, noted that there are many inter-jurisdictional issues involved with regional bus service. This could be avoided with a regional Public Transportation Benefit Area.

[2019 Priorities](#)

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

Public Comment

Marci Buskala, President, Moran Beach Improvement Club, does not support the WSDOT recommendation for roundabouts for Banta Road and Troxler Roads. She explained that it will make it difficult for residents who live on SR 20 to exit their driveways.

Bob Ortblad recommends a tunnel to replace the Mukilteo – Clinton ferry. He also suggested a reservation study for the Clinton-Mukilteo route, exploring pricing and timed reservations for peak and off-peak travel hours.

Ralph Young said that Coupeville-Port Townsend is the weakest link of Whidbey connections. He suggests the Long-Range Plan revitalize study of the Keystone harbor.

Dave Hoogenwerf noted that the WSF plan does not adequately address capacity issues. He said that the ferry capital surcharge has been repurposed for other capital projects. The LRP also does not include cost-containment as a strategy. He warned that fare simplification should not be a goal in itself. Each fare policy has a reason. Integrated fare media would be very nice.

Reflections and Next Steps

Commissioner Serebrin wants to see a more nuanced approach to health and equity in transportation, spanning the full range of health impacts.

Chairman Litt noticed the collaborative efforts of communities on the island and the region. WSDOT is very attentive to the local needs.

ACTION: None

FOLLOW-UP: None at this time

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

JERRY LITT, Chairman

ROY JENNINGS, Vice-Chairman

ABSENT
SHIV BATRA, Member

ABSENT
JAMES A. RESTUCCI, Member

HESTER SEREBRIN, Member

JOE TORTORELLI, Member

DEBBIE YOUNG, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL